

LEFTIST GROUPS, '68 ALI BOXING BOUT AMONG TARGETS

Newly Opened Files Shed Added Light on FBI's 'War'

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CHICAGO—They were "soldiers" in a secret war against the American people, and in one previously unpublicized battle they successfully "knocked out" a Muhammad Ali heavyweight bout.

They mobilized their nationwide resources to plot the humiliation of a widely known antiwar leader after learning through confidential sources that she had contracted venereal disease from another top antiwar militant.

They covertly arranged for the Chicago Building Department to harass American Nazi headquarters here with discriminatory building-code inspections—then sat back and listened, straight-faced, when Nazi leaders trooped into their office to complain that the city harassment violated their constitutional rights.

They were agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. And the se-

cret war they waged was directed by J. Edgar Hoover—at first, only against the Communist Party, but eventually against major segments of U.S. society, including civil rights activists and antiwar militants.

The target list eventually took in the Socialist Workers Party, then "white extremist" groups such as the Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan, and finally militant civil rights organizations and activist antiwar groups of the New Left.

This battle to curb anti-Establishment political activities that Hoover couldn't abide was called COINTELPRO, for Counter-Intelligence Program.

It was waged from the mid-1950s until the early 1970s, according to the FBI, although some FBI records suggest it ran longer. And the after-effects caused by the program's disclosure are still being felt—in Congress, where efforts are being made to outlaw such abuses, and in the courts, where damages resulting from

the covert campaign still are being litigated.

Fresh details of this secret war have just become available, with the reluctant release by the FBI, under federal court order, of much of its files from the bureau's Chicago field office.

The documents were obtained jointly by the Alliance to End Repression, the American Civil Liberties Union and Business & Professional People for the Public Interest, through U.S. District Court suits aimed at ending police-agency spying on law-abiding civic and community groups.

The material, examined exclusively by the Chicago Sun-Times, encompasses more than 4,186 reports and bares hundreds of previously unpublicized or little-known activities—many of them illegal, outlandish or vicious.

The bureau maintains that it halted the program in March, 1971, and the FBI's parent Justice Department first

acknowledged in late 1973 that such a program had existed. Since that time, sometimes in dribbles and sometimes in gushers, added details have been disclosed.

But many of the documents released by the bureau have been heavily censored, and many files have been withheld, sometimes despite court orders, purportedly to protect the identity of informers who assisted in the program.

Disclosure of what the FBI contends is the complete Chicago field office file on the program provides unique insights into how Hoover turned the nation's most respected investigative agency into a secret political police force.

The Chicago files give the lie to apologists for Hoover who have contended that the program was waged equally against what Hoover defined as "extremists" of both the left and the right. Instead, the new documents reveal that:

—The bureau set out to extermin-

ate the so-called New Left and militant or high-profile black civil rights groups—and even sought to provoke injury or death among their leaders. At one point, in a directive on the New Left, Washington exhorted FBI field offices that "no opportunity will be missed to destroy this insidious movement." Similarly marked for "destruction" in a memo was the group then known as the Nation of Islam or the Black Muslims. (The religious organization is now called the World Community of Al-Islam in the West, and its members are known as Bilalians.)

—In contrast, so-called white hate groups, such as the Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan, were merely harassed to limit their effectiveness and to hold down their membership. Another organization listed as a target in this group was the local branch of the National States Rights Party which at one point virtually took over complete control of Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace's presidential campaign in the Chicago area. No action was taken against the party here, according to the files.

—Other supermilitant white extremist groups—such as the Minutemen and the Legion of Justice—were left untouched in the Chicago area, de-

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spite the undisguised violence and illegality of their actions.

Former members of the Legion of Justice told the Chicago Sun-Times that they may have been left alone because of their frequent cooperation with the Chicago police Red Squad during the legion's violent attacks on student protesters, antiwar groups and left-wing organizations. The Red Squad and the FBI cooperated closely, according to the records. But the bureau's apparent failure to go after Minutemen groups in northern Illinois, when it was harassing the Minutemen vigorously elsewhere, remains a puzzle.

The FBI's role in scuttling the Muhammad Ali boxing match is revealed in the Chicago file on the fight and campaign against the Black Muslims, at that time formally known as the Nation of Islam, which Ali joined in 1964.

In the late summer of 1964, while Ali was appealing his conviction for refusing Army induction, he decided he wanted to start fighting again—to

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warm up for the day when he would seek to regain the title his conviction had cost him. And he learned that the only way to get around the ban that all state boxing commissions had placed on any Ali fight was to set up a match on federally controlled property—such as an Indian reservation.

The opponent Ali chose was Zora Folley, the challenger he had knocked out in his last title defense before being banished. Folley lived just outside Phoenix, Ariz., right next to the Pima Indians' Gila River Reservation where a tribal group was anxious to host the fight as a benefit for Indian youths.

On the morning of Sept. 26, after contracts with the local group had been signed, the 10-round exhibition with Folley was announced. It was pictured as the fight that would start Ali back toward the top—which apparently infuriated Hoover, who detested Ali not only for his religious conversion but for his antiwar image as well.

After word was passed to the Bureau of Indian Affairs that the FBI was concerned about the fight, an

Oct. 10, 1963, report shows that an official of the BIA appeared at the Phoenix FBI office on the afternoon of Sept. 26, with a member of the Gila River Reservation's tribal council.

The report, sent from Phoenix to Washington with a duplicate for Chicago, says Phoenix's special agent in charge told the Indians that letting Ali fight on the reservation would be handing money to the Muslim leader Elijah Muhammad, and would be dishonoring the tribe's many sons who had fought in the armed services.

The next day, the tribal council met and voted to refuse permission for the fight. Its members told newsmen they didn't want to appear "in sympathy with militant groups such as the Black Muslims," and did not want to "desecrate the land so many of our brave boys in the military had walked on."

Four days later, a report revealed, the tribal elder who had conferred with the FBI called the special agent in charge and said the council's rejection of the Ali-Folley fight had been "based on the presentation of the observations" of the Phoenix FBI chief.

The FBI scheme to humiliate the woman antiwar activist began with a phone call she made in December, 1963, from her West Coast home to

the Chicago headquarters of the New Left group she helped direct.

The FBI learned that, in the woman related to a confidant that she had contracted gonorrhea apparently from one of two other national leaders of the group. The bureau then tried to learn what the woman's California doctor had reported the infection as required law, and found that he hadn't. Washington told Chicago to check state and local laws here, where an activist worked, to see if she was required to report such diseases. Another suggested possibility was to off a friendly newsmen to the aid.

The FBI's first move against local Nazis, once the program against "white extremists" began in 1964, was to use an informant's detailed knowledge of building, fire and health violations to get the city's building department started on a lengthy series of hearings, discriminatory inspections of Nazis' new headquarters.

Ironically, Nazi leaders twice wrote to the FBI to complain that the harassment was violating their constitutional rights.

After three years of sustained pressure, they were ousted from building by a housing court judge, January, 1966.